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My Note Book.



THE great art event of the winter will undoubtedly be the Art Loan Exhibition, to be held during the month of December at the National Academy of Design, in aid of the Bartholdi Pedestal Fund. Some three years have passed since a similar affair was held, and in the interim the average collector has not only largely increased his store of art objects, but also his store of knowledge in relation to his specialty. That the exhibition will not be merely local in interest is evident from the fact that the committee is already in treaty for contributions from Brooklyn, Albany, Boston, Philadelphia, Louisville, Cincinnati, Cleveland, St. Louis, Washington, Chicago and Baltimore, and important contributions are expected from England. I understand that it is not intended to exhibit paintings which have been publicly shown before in New York. This, of course, would exclude many famous works in the Stewart, Belmont, Stuart, Astor, Wolfe, Roberts, Mills and Vanderbilt galleries. But it is believed that the owners of these treasures will generously act upon the suggestion of Mr. Jesse Seligman, that during the month of December their galleries be thrown open to the public on the payment of a fee to be applied to the Pedestal Fund. This would leave the committee free to select from new works about a hundred and fifty chefs-d'œuvre for the South Room of the Academy. When one remembers that the exhibition of one hundred masterpieces this summer was the great art event in Paris, even overshadowing in interest the annual Salon, he is reminded that the success of an art exhibition depends not so much upon quantity as quality.

It was wise of the committee to hire the Academy of Design instead of some larger building, or two large buildings, as some one proposed. With the rooms on the first floor, which have been secured in addition to those usually occupied at the Academy exhibitions, there will be ample space. The library will be admirably suited for embroidery and ceramic exhibits, and the corridors up-stairs will afford room enough for the shallow cases necessary for the display of such objects as coins and gems. A promiscuous exhibition like a county fair, making up in noise what it lacks in quality, is not to be desired in a fine art collection. The greatest treasures in the forthcoming exhibition will probably be those occupying the least space.

CERTAINLY the Loan Exhibition enterprise is started under most favorable auspices. The president, Mr. Allen Thorndike Rice, advances the committee a sufficient sum of money to begin operations; Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt accepts the chairmanship of the Finance Committee, Mr. Richard M. Hunt of the Insurance Committee, Mr. John La Farge of the Committee on Oriental Art, Monsignor Capel of the Department of Ecclesiastical Art, and Mrs. John Sherwood of the Fan Committee. Among the committees we also find such names as Mrs. John Jacob Astor, Mrs. Burton N. Harrison, Mrs. Sidney Webster, Mrs. F. R. Jones, Miss J. E. Faitoute, E. C. Moore, ex-Commander Goringe, A. S. Sullivan, A. S. Hewitt, and the artists Gifford, Huntington, Chase, Beckwith, Dielman, Tiffany, St. Gaudens, Ward and Brandt.

In the selection of Mr. F. Hopkinson Smith as Art Director of the exhibition, the committee has made a good choice. This gentleman is not only an artist of reputation, but he is known to possess extraordinary energy and executive ability. In the absence of Mr. Frank D. Millet, whose prolonged sojourn in Europe prevents his accepting the position, which originally was tendered to him, it would be hard to find a man so fitted for the place as Mr. Smith.

SOME amusing gossip comes to me from a correspondent in Rome, who says: "One sees and hears queer things in the studios here. I know an American, soi-disant artist, who lives by making copies—and such copies!—of the famous pictures in Roman

galleries. As it is difficult to get permission to make these copies, the galleries being private and not national like those of France and England, this artist makes his copies from colored photographs in his own studio! As he sells his time, and not his work—i.e., receives so much a month from a certain rich American 'connoisseur' to turn out as many copies as possible in that time—he is naturally given to a 'broad' style of handling, a sort of impressionist rendering of Renaissance minutiae and finesse. This does not escape the sharp business eye of his patron, and the other day I heard this Medici of the arts enjoin upon his Michael Angelo, in giving directions for a copy of Titian's 'Sacred and Profane Love,' 'Be sure and put in plenty of "detail," always more detail; there's where Titian always failed'!"

THE picture-dealers in Paris, I learn, are all complaining of the utter stagnation of the market. Absolutely no business is being done. For this, several reasons are given. In the first place, the effects of the great "krach" on the Bourse, owing to the failure of the Union Générale, are still being felt, and the more remote consequences are even more serious than the more immediate were. Secondly, of course, the seaside and shooting season keeps the rich Parisian amateurs away from the capitol. Thirdly, the Americans are not buying on account of the new tariff, and as the Americans are not buying, the English and German dealers do not buy either. On the other hand, the lull in the picture business is partly explicable as the natural reaction against the absurdly high prices that have been obtained of late years for the works of mediocre artists. The water-color craze, in particular, has come utterly to grief, and many an artist who, two or three years ago, was driving a coach harnessed with more than the necessary number of steeds, now finds himself in a pecuniary quandary.

LOUIS LELOIR, for instance, has not only seen the market price of his water-colors descend to just one-fifth what it was two years ago, but, as is proved by his works exhibited in the National Salon, he has lost his skill as an oil painter. Lambert, the cat-painter, is more or less in the same case. In proof of this statement, my informant gives the brief history of an aquarelle by M. Louis Leloir, "Une Marche Forcée," the most important work exhibited by the painter at the water-color exhibition of 1881. This water-color was bought by Goupil & Co. ostensibly for 20,000 francs; which probably meant 18,000 francs. It was sold by them to the Vicomte Henri Greffuhle for 30,000 francs, or \$6000. The Vicomte Greffuhle, however, soon grew tired of his expensive purchase, and returned it to the Goupils, who resold it to M. Ferdinand Bischoffsheim for 25,000 francs. M. Bischoffsheim, in his turn, grew tired of the picture, and returned it to Goupil & Co., who gave him other pictures in exchange. Finally, at the end of last season, Goupil & Co., finding themselves overcrowded with water-colors that amateurs were no longer anxious to buy, got up a sale at the Hôtel Drouot. At this sale Louis Leloir's "Marche Forcée" was sold for 6000 and odd francs! About the same time M. Georges Petit organized a similar sale of water-colors, and both M. Petit and Goupil & Co. lost very large sums by the breaking up of the water-color craze, of which these sales were the final manifestation.

A SCORE of instances both among oil painters and among water-color painters might be cited of artists who are about to come to grief through having placed too much trust in the whims of fashion. Berne-Bellecour, for instance, whose works were recently much sought for in America, is in a very bad way. At the Salon of 1872 this artist created quite a sensation with his "Coup de Canon," a genre picture which had the good fortune to please the public, the more so as it was a souvenir of the then recent siege of Paris. Engraving has popularized the subject of this picture representing a group of artillerymen and marines on the ramparts of Paris firing one of those long bronze guns whose barking was so familiar to the Parisians during five anxious months. Leaning against the earthworks an officer watches with his field-glass the effects of the shell, while the soldiers, in muddy cloaks, wait silently in the sordid and dismal landscape of besieged Paris. All this Berne-Bellecour caught with care and rendered with intelligent ability,

only in it was wanting truly virile invention. It was pretty, but after all it was only the transposition on to canvas of a photographic group, a transposition made by an artist of talent and of taste. This "coup de canon" was war and its furies brought within the reach of men and women of society, and the painting made Berne-Bellecour famous and fashionable. Everybody wanted a picture by him, and instead of establishing his fame by important works, he began painting quantities of little studies and single figures, bought a villa at Nice, and built himself a little palace on the Plaine Monceau, like all the other successful artists who came up between 1872 and 1882. Formerly Berne-Bellecour received from the dealers 2000 to 2500 francs for a small single figure; at present, the dealers will not give him more than 600 or 800 francs, and furthermore, like many of his colleagues, he finds himself saddled with an expensive establishment, his house is mortgaged, and naturally the worry of such a hampered existence is not conducive to the conception of works that will restore a tottering reputation.

BUT, as has been said, cases like M. Berne-Bellecour's are far from isolated; indeed, during the past ten years the Parisian painters have never worn longer faces than they do at present, and both painters and dealers are beginning to see the end of the era of fancy prices. Furthermore, considering the risky basis on which some of the Parisian picture firms are founded, it is certain that if the dulness continues and if any sort of crisis declares itself, things will go hard with some even of the most showy establishments. At present it would be premature to prophesy such a crisis; but, as far as I can hear, the coming season in Paris promises poorly, and no big auction sales are yet spoken of. There will, however, probably be sold a certain number of works by Troyon, Daubigny, and Corot, for which some American dealers are ready to pay very long prices, long enough to tempt certain Parisian amateurs to sell out speculative purchases.

THE Corot-Trouillebert affair, a Paris correspondent informs me, has been hushed up for the present, as the interest of all concerned in it demands. But as it has been brought before the law courts it will necessarily have some conclusion before the close of the year. Readers of THE ART AMATEUR will remember the circumstances of the case: M. Dumas, the younger, three years ago gave Petit, the Paris dealer, twelve thousand francs for a masterpiece of Corot, which turns out to have been painted by Trouillebert; and M. Dumas, being no longer able to admire the picture, gets his money back.

So many cases similar to this have recently been brought to light that no wonder Philistines refuse to believe in any paintings but such as please them, regardless of the name or reputation of the artist. About twenty or thirty years ago the original of the replicas at the Louvre and Naples Museums of Leonardo da Vinci's "La Vierge aux Rochers," bought by Lord Suffolk from Gavin Hamilton, was cut from its frame where it hung in his lordship's country house, and was carried off—where to and by whom no one could tell, and the thief was never caught. Not long since it came to light, however, that this canvas was at one time hawked about London by a man who asked for it the modest sum of five pounds. But even at that price he failed to find a customer for it. Among others who saw it was Sir Charles Eastlake, Director of the National Gallery. This eminent critic contemptuously pronounced it an indifferent copy, just as—in company with Passavant and Waagen—he had pronounced against Morris Moore's "Raphael." The canvas was recently found rolled up in an out-of-the-way corner in Somerset House, and, being identified, was at once restored to Lord Suffolk, who has since sold it to the British nation for nine thousand pounds. So it would appear that a masterpiece of Leonardo unauthenticated is not worth twenty-five dollars, while forty-five thousand dollars is considered a reasonable price when its authenticity is established. A Raphael is worthless when bought for seventy pounds in a London auction-room in 1850, and is deemed a bargain at two hundred thousand francs when hung in the Louvre in 1883. And, on the other hand, an expert dealer and a noted connoisseur in 1880 rave over the beauties of a Corot which is held cheap at twelve thousand francs, and

in 1883 the noted connoisseur accidentally finds he has been deceived by the expert dealer and he will not have, at any price, the masterpiece of which for three years he has boasted as the gem of his collection.

* * *

THE Times wants to know why our architects use the word New York when they label a building in this city. Do they expect the building to be run away with, it asks, that they brand it so carefully with the name of the town in which it stands?

* * *

In worse taste is the fashion of the architect sprawling his name conspicuously on the face of the building. This unprofessional mode of advertising—which, by the way, is by no means confined to New York—should not be allowed by the owner of the property. A more than usually conspicuously offensive tablet of this kind greets one in Boston in passing the unsightly structure of the Foreign Exhibition.

* * *

THIS rage for advertising everywhere and under all circumstances so vulgarizes our country that, under its sway, nothing can save us from the stigma of being considered a people wholly devoid of true refinement. No, not all the "culture" we may crowd into our academies and into our homes, through the practice of the fine arts and the possession of pictures and statuary. The daily contemplation of what is sordid and unsightly can but be debasing to the popular taste. There is really no public conscience in this matter. Our street processions on Decoration Day, Mardi-Gras, or the Fourth of July are mostly composed of gaudy advertising vans. Our most beautiful scenery by river and road is disfigured by the sign painter's offensive advertising of soap, stove-polish and quack medicines. Even our gentlemen riflemen condescend to shoot for medals presented to advertise some special article of commerce. No other people so wantonly permit the most vulgar purposes of "business" to override the claims of propriety.

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MR. CLARENCE COOK, who has recently returned from a European trip, says he saw with pleasure, hanging in the Salon Carré of the Louvre, the "Morris Moore" Raphael, the "Apollo and Marsyas," which for so many years he, with many other admirers of this beautiful little work of the master's finest time, had worked so hopelessly to have purchased for this country. Recently speaking of the acquisition of this picture for two hundred thousand francs by the French Government, I stated my impression that the only engraving of it was by an American engraver, referring to the excellent block by T. Cole in Scribner's Monthly for November, 1879. Mr. Cook informs me that it was engraved by W. J. Linton soon after its purchase by Mr. Moore, and that a copy of Mr. Linton's engraving was shown not long ago in this city.

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TRULY "of making many books there is no end." The average American publisher believes that anything will serve for a holiday book, if only it can be illustrated. And that means everything from "Hey-diddle-diddle, the cat and the fiddle" to "Paradise Lost." Has not the clever Caldecott given new life to the ballad "Where are you going, my pretty maid?" illustrating every line? This, however, is a classic, and deserves immortality. The distinction has been reserved for Roberts Brothers of making a book out of nothing—I mean the three trivial stanzas of the hymn, "Lead, kindly light." The illustrations are by William St. John Harper and George R. Halm, which statement of fact and the further important information, conveyed on the fly-leaf, that they were "drawn and engraved under the supervision of George T. Andrew," make the sum total of the less than two hundred words which constitute the letter-press of the volume—and this includes title-page and all. Mr. Halm's part of the work is the least ambitious but the most satisfactory, showing pleasant fancy as well as ingenuity and knowledge of decorative effect. Mr. Harper's work originally was probably much better than it appears; for the wood-engraving, while pretending to artistic effect, is exceedingly slovenly. The fancifully attired young woman of the frontispiece, supposed to illustrate the fervent line "Lead, Thou, me on," looks up sulkily, as if, for example, she had asked for a new bonnet and had been refused. Detailed criticism of the other plates really is uncalled for.

MONTEZUMA.

Dramatic Fennelton.

Hamlet.—Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed?
Polonius.—My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2.

ALTHOUGH there had been, since the middle of August, several preliminary seasons, which may be compared to preliminary flourishes, the regular theatrical season in New York commenced on the first of October. It is a professional tradition that the season does not begin until Wallack's opens its doors, and fashionable people have adopted this tradition, which the managers of the other theatres have striven in vain to render practically obsolete.

Surely, a season may be regarded as opened when "The Rajah" is running to crowded houses at the Madison Square; "Prince Methusalem" at the Casino; "Excelsior" at Niblo's; "The Merry Duchess" at the Standard; "Pink Dominos" at the Union Square; "Francesca da Rimini" at the Star; French opera-bouffe at the Fifth Avenue; "The Mulligan Picnic" at the Comique, while the Grand Opera House, the Twenty-third Street, the Fourteenth Street, the Third Avenue, the Mt. Morris, and the People's theatres are more or less crowded with stars and combinations. But no! The season waits for Wallack's.

Thus, to compare small things with great—I mean the theatres by small things—do many persons believe that the Fall season has not begun until their favorite milliner or dressmaker announces the fact upon the card for her opening, although the initiated know that she has been quietly disposing of her best bonnets or robes several weeks in advance of the formal function.

As special attractions for the first night of the season, we were offered the revival of "Masks and Faces" at Wallack's; the first production in America of "Fédora" at the Fourteenth Street, and the rentrée of the Florences, in a new play called "Facts," at the Grand Opera House.

One might safely have predicted that these three performances would have attracted crowded houses, just as all the experts confidently predicted that St. Julien would trot faster than Jay-Eye-See; but the trotting experts were entirely mistaken, and the theatrical prophets were equally wrong. There were no crowds to see "Masks and Faces" and "Fédora" and "Facts" on the opening night.

What had become of the public? By what instinct is it that they keep away from the theatres when all the probabilities are that they will clamor for standing room? Our faith in probabilities has been rudely shaken by the constant differences between the newspaper predictions and the state of the weather; but is there no rule in theatricals by which certain causes may be relied upon to produce certain results? Alas! there is no such rule. Two new plays and an old comedy revival ought to have attracted the public; but the majority of the public ignored them. And their instinct was correct. Neither "Masks and Faces," "Fédora" nor "Facts" deserved a crowded audience.

* * *

"MASKS AND FACES" is a pretty, not very interesting and very old-fashioned play, which requires to be acted perfectly in order to amuse a modern audience. It is a show play for the *Peg Woffington* or the *Triplet*, and if the *Peg* or the *Triplet* be great, the piece is accepted for their sake.

Now, at Wallack's, Miss Rose Coghlan, the *Peg Woffington*, is a good, but not a great, actress. She is too cold for the Aprilish heroine created by Charles Reade. In a part which should be all heart, she lacks heartiness, as well as that subtle sympathy which charms an audience and identifies an actress with the character she impersonates. She is an Irishwoman, but of a different type from naughty, merry, warm-hearted *Peg*. She dances a jig; but dances, as it were, under protest, knowing that she would appear to more advantage in a minuet. There is no fault to find with the conventional details of her performance, except the fatal fault of conventionality. *Peg Woffington* is nothing if not unconventional.

John Howson, the low comedian who has just been added to Mr. Wallack's company, is an equally conventional *Triplet*. He seems to have been cast for the character because, like *Triplet*, he can play the violin. The fiddlers in the orchestra can also play

the violin; but is that any reason why they should attempt to play *Triplet*? Mr. Howson has made his successes in burlesque and in such clever caricatures as that of the Rev. Dr. Talmage, and the delicate and delicious nuances of old comedy are as yet beyond him. At Wallack's he may yet mellow and ripen into a true comedian; but at present his only claims to such a part as *Triplet* are his ambition and his knowledge of the fiddle.

The rest of the cast of "Masks and Faces" is only remarkable for its insignificance. Who can become interested in the troubles of such an *Ernest Vane* as Mr. Gerald Eyre and such a *Mabel Vane* as Miss Adela Measor? What imagination is strong enough to see a *Sir Charles Pomander* in Mr. Wilmot Eyre? No wonder that the performance dragged; that the audience was unmistakably bored; that "Masks and Faces" will only be kept upon the bills long enough to permit a dramatization of Ouida's novel, "Moths," to be properly rehearsed.

Mr. Wallack plays his theatrical cards as dear John Brougham used to play his cards at whist—he holds back his trumps until the last. He has a fine company, led by such genuine artists as Madame Ponisi and John Gilbert; he has secured half a dozen new English and French plays; but he withheld these trumps and led such small cards as Miss Measor and the Eyre brothers!

I need not say that modern management and modern whist do not recognize this style of play. However, as a full hand of trumps ought always to win, and as Mr. Wallack holds them in his elegant theatre, his powerful company and his strong repertory, we may congratulate him upon the principle that a bad beginning sometimes makes a good ending.

* * *

"FÉDORA," written by Victorien Sardou for Sarah Bernhardt, fits Sarah Bernhardt as perfectly as her costumes by Worth. If she were to play it here, she would make the same furor that she has made in Paris and London. But the question is whether "Fédora" will fit Miss Fanny Davenport? Can any other actress wear Sarah Bernhardt's costumes?

I take it for granted that every reader is familiar with the story of the play. The heroine discovers that her betrothed has been murdered, and she suspects that a certain Nihilist is his murderer. She follows this man to Paris; induces him to fall in love with her; coaxes him to confess his crime, and arranges that, when he leaves her house, he shall be arrested. Then, to her horror, she finds that he is not a Nihilist, not a political assassin, but the avenger of his injured honor, her betrothed having been false to her on the eve of his marriage. She loves the man whom she had taught herself to hate. She hates the murdered rōu whom she had sworn to avenge. Instead of delivering the murderer up to justice, she marries him. But, in the last act, he learns that she is the woman who has persecuted, denounced, and exiled him, and, as he turns upon her in anger, she poisons herself and dies.

In this play M. Sardou runs through the whole gamut of feminine emotions, but he does it with a rude touch, leaving to Sarah Bernhardt the grateful task of supplying the finesse and rendering the character of *Fédora* harmonious. According to the foreign critics, she accomplishes this task. Miss Fanny Davenport does not.

The heroine of "Fédora" is everything by turns and nothing long. She loves; she doubts; she weeps; she suspects; she fears; she rages; she is as cold as marble; she is as fierce as a tigress; she is weak as water; she is a cyclone of wrath; she is as brave as a lion; she is as treacherous as a cat; she is as virtuous as Diana; she is as proud as Juno; she is as passionate as Venus—all in four acts and three hours!

"Fédora" is a very clever play, a very French play, a very stacy play, a very effective play, but it is a play for Sarah Bernhardt only, and it is not a play which will greatly interest or amuse the American public. Many persons may go to see it out of curiosity; but few of them will ever go again. These few will go to admire the acting of R. B. Mantell, although they had rather admire him in some other play—say as *Armand* in "Camille."

Yes; by one of those freaks of fortune which distinguish theatrical affairs, the success of "Fédora" was made by Mr. Mantell, who plays the suspected